



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX) Homeland Security Committee

*"Strengthening the Safety and Security of Our Nation:
The President's FY2019 Budget Request for DHS"*

April 26, 2018

Remarks as Prepared

Our homeland faces threats on multiple fronts. International terrorists seek to attack our country and kill Americans. Human traffickers, drug smugglers, and gangs like MS-13, are crossing our borders and infecting our neighborhoods. Nation states and hackers are engaging in cyberwarfare. And the next natural disaster can strike at any moment.

We cannot let our guard down. We need a budget that matches these most pressing needs. Fortunately, the President's FY2019 budget request addresses many of these concerns. The \$1.6 billion for a border wall and additional funds to hire more ICE Officers and Border Patrol Agents will help curb illegal immigration.

Securing our borders continues to be one of my top priorities. That is why I introduced legislation to get the job done. My bill authorizes \$18 billion for the construction of a border wall, ends funding for sanctuary cities, closes dangerous loopholes, and puts more boots on the ground.

It also secures ports of entry, authorizes the National Guard to provide aviation and intelligence support, and targets visa overstays. This Administration has been a strong supporter of these solutions and I commend the recent decision to deploy the National Guard to the border.

I am also pleased to see \$713 million requested for cybersecurity operations at NPPD. As Americans become more reliant on cyberspace, we are all targets. This Committee has a strong bipartisan track record on this issue.

We passed bills to expedite hiring at DHS and enhance cyber threat information sharing. We also recently secured \$26 million to support election infrastructure.

In January, the House approved our landmark bill to create a stand-alone organization to elevate the cybersecurity mission at DHS. I am hoping the Senate will get this bill to the President's desk very soon.

Another area of concern for me is aviation security. I have been very disappointed at the slow pace of installing Computed Tomography (CT) scans in our airports.

However, I am glad that we secured \$65 million in the Omnibus for TSA to begin installing this technology immediately.

These CT scanners provide 3D imagery to help stop IEDs and other threats from boarding airplanes. Compared to the technology we have now, it's the difference between an x-ray and an MRI.

The FY2019 budget request for an additional \$71.5 million for CT will certainly help, but I don't believe it is enough to mitigate the threat.

Many terrorists are only one plane ride away. Our aviation sector is still their "crown jewel" of targets.

DHS must fight through all bureaucratic hurdles so CT scanners are in our airports and last points of departure for in-bound flights as soon as possible.

Some parts of this budget request will help DHS carry out its mission. But other parts miss the mark. The \$473 million cut to FEMA grants for state and local first responders is a major step backwards. Many parts of the country, including my home State of Texas, were devastated by natural disasters last year.

I personally toured the devastation after Hurricane Harvey. Our first responders played a key role in saving lives.

Last week, our Committee reviewed the lessons learned from both the Boston Marathon bombings and the recent bombings in my hometown of Austin.

Our first responders were crucial in both cities and they need our support. I hope today's hearing will shed light on why these grants are targeted for cuts.

Protecting our homeland must be a unifying cause. Partisanship should end at the water's edge. Last July, the House passed the first ever, comprehensive reauthorization of DHS with overwhelming bipartisan support.

This reauthorization reasserts Congress's authority to write laws, streamlines redundant programs, protects taxpayer dollars, and supports America's front-line defenders and first responders.

Unfortunately, our friends in the Senate have not yet passed our bill. I strongly urge them to do so without further delay. Madame Secretary, in this Congress alone, our Committee has passed 82 bills through the House and 6 were signed into law. Politico named us the "hardest working Committee in Congress."

A strong DHS is our goal and we are here to support you. All of us are grateful for your service and for the hardworking professionals at DHS. We all look forward to working with you to keep our homeland safe.

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